

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (D-GA) today applauded action taken by the U.S. House of Representatives to override President Bush's veto of legislation that would have prevented an 11% pay cut to doctors who treat Medicare patients. The House vote of 383 to 41 surpassed the two-thirds majority required to override a presidential veto.

"As the baby boom generation retires, Congress must do all that it can to ensure that our nation's current and future senior citizens have access to affordable health care. Preventing these payment cuts is a good start," said Bishop.

The legislation, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act, blocks a 10.6% cut in payments to physicians treating Medicare patients. This cut was scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2008. The bill also freezes the current payment rates through the end of the year, and provides for a 1.1% increase for 2009.

"Should these cuts have taken effect, many physicians would have found it too costly to continue to treat their Medicare patients," said Bishop.

The legislation also includes provisions benefiting rural America, including authorization of almost \$105 million for a federal grant program to help states provide health services to Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans living in rural areas. Another \$5 million authorization will go toward grants for small "critical access hospitals" located in rural areas that are making a transition to skilled nursing and assisted living facilities.

The legislation now moves to the Senate.